



news from the

alexandria community services board

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Fathers in the City Jail

Children benefit when fathers are involved in their children's lives. At the Alexandria Adult Detention Center, the CSB offers a parenting class to men in the general jail population. Participants learn how to love and discipline their children in ways that support healthy child development.

The fathers in the group have few memories of a positive male role model in their lives. Some recall happy moments of going to the mall or going fishing. Most of their recollections are of having no father. "I'm blessed that mom did the best she could, but there's nothing like having a father in your life. I always wanted that." They recall "whoopings," and one young man describes his house as being "like a truck stop, both parents alcoholics, people coming in the front door, drinking, then going out the back." For another man his most unpleasant memory is "simply that I have no memories of a father."

The men ask questions such as how to tell their children that it's not the child's fault daddy's in jail. One man describes seeing his little girl "reach out to the glass" to try and touch him. "It hurts."

When asked what they want for their children, the fathers list "high self-esteem, self-control, a good education, the knowledge that they are loved and the ability to do what they like." Therapist Marge Barrales believes these men want to become good fathers, and she is giving them the tools to do so. A

thirty-five year-old man says, "I wanted to take this class because, to tell the truth, I don't know how to be a father. I don't even know how to live. All I know are penitentiaries and amphetamines. I want to be the one to break the cycle in my family, but I need help."

How to Be a Better Father



Benefits of Gardening

Gardening offers benefits to all people, including those with special needs and people in recovery. The consumers of Alexandria Detox will be converting the area behind the Detox Center into a garden with shaded areas for group activities. Many CSB group home residents with mental retardation or mental illness also cultivate flowers and vegetables.

The Detox program is seeking donations of: soil, seeds, flowers, small shrubs, gloves, knee pads, spades, rocks, and other garden supplies.

Developing a garden provides skills training, physical activity, and even a form of therapy. What's more, it is a socially accepted pastime that anyone can enjoy. These are valuable attributes since people with disabilities sometimes find themselves isolated from everyday activities. Simply working outdoors provides pleasant stimulation. Once seeds are planted, the gardeners experience the optimism found in the anticipation of growth, and they are rewarded each time a new leaf unfolds.



At Taylor Run Group Home, the residents grow a variety of tomatoes, peppers and kale.

If you would like to support the horticultural activities of the Alexandria Detox consumers by donating a garden item, please contact Ubax Hussen to arrange for drop off at the Mill Road location. †

Volunteers are needed to serve as Legally Authorized Representatives to help adults with disabilities make treatment decisions. See page 2.

The Preschool Prevention Team at Work in Alexandria

The Preschool Prevention Team (PPT) is a group of mental health professionals who teach children, parents and teachers the skills needed for healthy child development, thereby working to “prevent” emotional problems. The PPT developed in June 2004 with funding from the City of Alexandria including a Children’s Fund Grant from the Early Childhood Commission.

The PPT collaborates with 15 Alexandria preschools and two homeless shelters. At nine of the schools the team implemented a research-based curriculum called *Al’s Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices*. Al and his puppet friends, Keisha and Ty, present 46 lessons that engage children through the use of puppet-lead discussions, songs, interpretive movements, pictures and books. The children learn about positive communication, expressing feelings, safe and unsafe situations and how to solve problems.

Lib Gillam, a PPT therapist, explains that “the children really love Al the puppet. For them he is real, and they want to know who his mom is and where he goes to school.” Two of the most popular songs from *Al’s Pals* are the *Calm Down Song* and *Stop and Think*.

Al sends letters to the children’s parents too, providing helpful tips and teaching the parents about what their preschoolers



are learning. The parent education series *Here, Now and Down the Road* teaches parents to reinforce prosocial skills in the home.

Evening Dinner Theaters are held for parents during which the PPT performs skits that bring parenting skills to life. A light meal, child care, Spanish interpretation and other parent incentives are provided.

A recent \$70,000 grant awarded by the Tobacco Settlement Foundation will allow the hiring of an additional PPT therapist to train 22 teachers on the implementation of *Al’s Pals*.

The PPT also holds support groups for teens and preschoolers at two Alexandria homeless shelters. PPT therapist, Arika Benedict supports the teens through their anger and depression, and helps them deal with the issues of their identity. “Some teens

are so ashamed of being homeless that they walk around for an hour after school so nobody sees them go towards the shelter.”

The PPT provides other services including family counseling at shelters, parent and teacher consultations, training, mental health assessments and referrals.

For more information on the PPT, please call Lib Gillam or Arika Benedict at 703.838.6400.



Seeking Legally Authorized Representatives

A few good volunteers are needed to give three hours each month as Legally Authorized Representatives (LARs). LARs assist adult consumers with disabilities in making decisions about their CSB treatment plans. The LAR is asked to: meet with the consumer and CSB providers quarterly for the treatment planning session, sign the consumer’s treatment plan, and maintain contact with the consumer by phone or visits so as to be familiar with the person’s needs and

wishes. Consumers may have mental retardation and/or a mental illness, and some are senior citizens. They may live in a CSB group home or in a supported living apartment. LARs are essential for these consumers to receive services. Make a difference with just a few hours each month. For more information, call Jennifer Cohen Cordero at 703.838.4455.!



Meet a CSB Board Member

Mary Riley is a community volunteer and former personnel management consultant. She chairs Strategic Planning for



Alexandria's Homeless Services Coordinating Committee and serves on the *House Shelter Advisory Committee* for ALIVE! Inc. Ms. Riley is the Chair of the CSB's *Extended Care Committee* and the Board representative on the CSB's *Ethics Committee*, as well as the *Public Health Advisory Commission*.

What is the Alexandria CSB?

The Alexandria Community Services Board is a group of 16 citizen volunteers appointed by the City Council. The CSB oversees publicly funded services for Alexandrians with mental illness, mental retardation or a substance abuse problem. CSB policies and programs are implemented and managed through the City's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse. Board meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month except August, and are open to the public. Please call 703.838.4455 to sign up. Accommodations will be made for persons with a disability.†

Employee Snapshot: Mental Retardation Case Management Team

Being a case manager for persons with mental retardation requires not only organization, knowledge and resourcefulness, but a combination of compassion and assertiveness.

The team of six case managers at the CSB coordinates the services of all the adult consumers with mental retardation; approximately 200 per year. The case managers assess individual and family needs, help to apply for and maintain entitlements such as Social Security and Medicaid, and make living arrangements. Case managers help consumers with job placement, training programs and day support programs. They provide high school students with assistance in transitioning into adult life, and work with advocacy groups to ensure the highest quality of services for consumers.

Julia Bain has been a case manager for one year. Prior to this she spent two years working directly with consumers with mental retardation in the CSB's Vocational Services program.

Martha Boyer has worked as a case manager for eleven years. She works part-time so she can be at home with her four children. Martha enjoys the relationships with the consumers and their families. "I have met many people who have opened my eyes to different cultures and backgrounds."

Dawn Fox has been a case manager for one year. Dawn enjoys "going beyond the call of duty" to help consumers. On the weekends she provides coverage in CSB group homes. "Providing one-on-one direct service is far different from case management, yet very fulfilling."

Darlene Cannaday has been with the CSB for eight years where she has worked in case management for both mental health and mental retardation. Despite the "massive amount of paperwork," Darlene enjoys "linking consumers with needed services and doing community outreach."

Dina Lewin worked for six months in Intake, and has been a case manager for five years since. Dina loves to "make a difference in people's lives," and she feels great when consumers or their representatives thank her for her work.

Harry Wachsmuth has been with the CSB for over 11 years. He started with the STEP program, then spent eight years working directly with MR consumers in Vocational Services before becoming a case manager. Harry feels "privileged and blessed to be an advocate for persons under his care."

This team won an Outstanding Employee Performance Award in 2004 for their work and dedication.

For more information about MR Case Management Services, call 703.519.5932.†



Front: Darlene Cannaday and Dina Lewin.
Back: Julia Bain and Harry Wachsmuth.



Alexandria Community
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The Diversity Committee Recognizes Gay Pride Month

Why become aware of gay and lesbian culture? As part of the CSB's effort to acknowledge the diversity of consumers and staff, it is important to recognize that differences come not only from race, ethnicity or sex, but from sexual orientation. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people often look beyond the families into which they were born to develop supportive connections with others like themselves, as they, like everyone, seek acceptance and validation in life. The Diversity Committee created a display in the lobby using photos and stories from the book ***Family-A Portrait of Gay and Lesbian America*** by Nancy Andrews. The display shows the different forms a family can take from a couple, or a couple with children and grandchildren, to a baseball team or a club. The people featured in the display courageously shared their stories with the world, stories that may have been kept secret, so that others can learn more about their families and lives.

In a continuing effort to educate people about other cultures, the Diversity Committee will show a film entitled ***I Can't Marry You*** during August and September. The documentary by Catherine Gray and narrated by Betty DeGeneres, explores same-sex marriage issues through the personal experiences of twenty gay and lesbian couples who have been in long-term relationships of 10-55+ years. "Their poignant and powerful testimonies put faces to, and actual examples of the painful impact of discrimination on our daughters and sons, sisters and brothers, parents, aunts and uncles, loyal friends, coworkers and tax paying neighbors."



To make comments, suggestions of story ideas or contributions, call Jennifer Cohen Cordero at 703.838.4455, x165.

The CSB recognizes that same-sex marriage is a highly- charged political issue. The Board does not take a position regarding this matter, but appreciates the importance of efforts by the Diversity Committee to inform the public about the subject.